



Mayor Perry Conner
Photo/Nancy Pierce

Deep River Rail-Trail

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dues & contributions are tax deductible.

By Nancy Pierce and Carrie Banks

Jim Dillinger, an Asheboro commercial photographer on a busman’s holiday, aims his Nikon at the V-shaped rock formation just below the churning water. “That’s a Native American fish trap”, explains Franklinville Mayor Perry Conner, who had happened on the photographer while hiking the Deep River Rail-Trail just downstream of the town center.

The fish trap is one of several natural, historical and recreational sites along this Randolph County rail-trail on a spur of the historic Atlantic & Yadkin Railroad. This short trail is gaining momentum when just five years ago it appeared to be seriously stalled. It’s a good example of the behind-the-scenes role North Carolina Rail-Trails can play when a project needs just a nudge to move forward.

Back in 2007, then-Franklinville Mayor and trail advocate Mac Whatley secured a North Carolina Recreational Trails Program grant to build a footbridge across Sandy Creek, a tributary that separates the Deep River towns of Franklinville and Ramseur. An abandoned railroad bridge had been removed, and Whatley figured that once a footbridge was in place, townspeople would see the benefit of a rail-trail connecting the two towns.

But public support to bridge an overgrown creek and an abandoned track waned. A new town council was poised to return the money to the state, fearing that bridge upkeep would fall to the town taxpayers.

At that time, another trail advocate, Harvey Harmon, asked NCRT founder and then-

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Photo/Nancy Pierce

Deep River Rail-Trail
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president Al Capehart for help. Together, they persuaded the town council and the state Recreational Trails Program to switch the grant money from a bridge to actual trail development. Harmon, owner of 125 acres beside the Deep River, donated an easement. The first three-quarters of a mile of the Deep River Rail-Trail opened in 2009. "They just needed to put the horse in front of the cart," Capehart said.

An environmentalist, green builder and entrepreneur, Harmon plans a mixed-income housing development adjacent to the Deep River-Trail with an emphasis on environmental sustainability, peace and self-reliance. "The trail, the river, the connectivity to Ramseur will be great for our residents," Harmon says.

Last fall the Randolph Hospital Community Health Foundation gave Franklinville money to finally build the footbridge across Sandy Creek and to restore a canoe/kayak landing there. Ramseur has begun the process of bringing the trail upstream to join the Franklinville section. This summer, another state Recreational

Trails Program grant will extend the trail upstream to the Franklinville park and town center. The next step is to follow the rail corridor upstream to Cedar Falls, for a Ramseur-to-Cedar Falls total length of four miles. Deep River Rail-Trail supporters hope it will eventually extend 15 miles north along the entire A&Y spur to Climax in Guilford County.

Already, the state has designated the Deep River from its headwaters in Guilford County to where it joins the Haw River near Jordan Lake in Lee County as a "blue trail" for paddlers. Calm and wide in some spots, the Deep River near Franklinville takes an elevation drop, creating rapids for more technical kayaking, especially after a good rain.

On this fine April Saturday, town commissioner Richard Goodwin hikes to the trail end at Sandy Creek. There, he greets a Ramseur fisherman, shivering and wet from wading the creek to a choice fishing spot on the Franklinville side. Richard is clearly pleased to tell him there will soon be a bridge.

When he ran for office two years ago, a voter asked Richard whether he favored the trail. "Not if it costs public money," he replied. "I don't believe in paying high taxes for non-essential public projects. That's why I live here instead of in a bigger city." Today, the Franklinville native is a staunch trail advocate. Gazing over the rapids, he mused: "Imagine a big employment center here. Just think of all the creativity that could flow while people take a break here on our trail, beside our river."

A few years ago the town of Franklinville had a chance to purchase some unique terrain across the Deep River from the town park, accessible by an old footbridge. But the Commissioners declined. So Perry Conner bought it and treats it like an extension to the park and rail-trail. A huge rock face hugs the

steep banks of the river there, a challenge for hikers. But the view from the top is worth it: the old Franklinsville Mill ruins, a lake and a couple of wooded ridge lines.

Agile and energetic, Perry scrambles along the shoreline and encourages children on a family fishing outing to help him pick up a few scattered pieces of litter. Large concrete picnic tables remind one of when thousands of mill workers lived and worked at the Franklinsville Mill. The workers camped, fished, swam, and had big group picnics across the river from the mill.

Built in 1838 and powered by the fast-flowing Deep River, the Franklinsville Mill thrived making uniforms first for Civil War and finally for Vietnam War soldiers, until it closed in 1979. Despite a 2010 fire, many of the original walls remain.

Running into each other on the trail, Perry and Richard – whose grandfather was the mill's last night watchman – decide to poke around the mill ruins. They locate the original rock tailrace where the water re-entered the river after powering the mill's waterwheel. Former mayor and local historian Mac Whatley is leading a drive to preserve the mill and create a textile museum as a trailside attraction.

As the shadows stretch over the Deep River, two bathing-suit-clad girls soak up the waning sun, dangling their toes in the cool water while texting. On the old footbridge, a child and his dad count five turtles lined up on a rock. The photographer aims his camera at a huge rock split like a tree struck by lightning.

Ramseur residents Laura Ireland and her two kids had driven up to explore the trail that will soon connect to their town. Dale, 5, yanks up a piece of grass-gone-to-seed and tries to blow off the bushy top, his cheeks puffing out with the effort. His sister Emma, 2, giggles and gives him a yellow flower.

Simple pleasures, big plans, and everything in between – The Deep River Rail-Trail has all it takes to be a premier nature, recreation and historic destination smack dab at the center of North Carolina.

NEW NCRT BOARD MEMBER CLARE REECE-GLORE

With the addition of Clare Reece-Glore to the Board, NCRT looks forward to more effective cooperation with the equestrian community on rail-trail advocacy statewide.

A Southport native, Durham resident and lifelong equestrian, Clare is involved with the NC Horse Council, an equestrian advocacy group. She and her quarter horse Paladin compete in Judged Trail Riding, a 6-10 mile course with obstacles every mile. Her husband John Strickler is a cyclist and devoted user of the American Tobacco Trail. Their daughter Britomarte is a college student.



Clare and John are principals of CJ Associates a Durham management consulting business. She also owns YAY dog!, behavioral coaching for dogs and their owners. "Trail users of all kinds should work together and help each other out politically and environmentally. Every mile may not be appropriate for every use, but we all benefit from trail conservation."

Share the Trails: Points to ponder regarding multi-use trail use and etiquette

- Rail-trails are ideal for beginning or limited mobility equestrians because they are wide and flat
- Equestrians should train their horses about different sorts of conditions
- Horses should be encouraged to go through small boggy spots in trails rather than circle them, to avoid making the spots bigger
- Mountain bikers should avoid riding the same ruts
- Walkers and cyclists should pause (briefly) when approaching a horse in either direction and give a friendly greeting
- It's best to wait for horses to traverse bridges and tunnels before crossing
- Bikes or strollers may spook some horses. Human talk calms them
- Many riders cannot dismount without a block or log, so they can't kick horse manure off the trail
- Young horses must keep moving, so stopping to remove manure may not be advisable
- Other trail users can help out by using a stick to remove manure from the trails
- Horses are herbivores and their poop is lower in nitrogen than cows and pigs and in small amounts does not harm streams
- The NC Horse Council is working with water quality experts to establish rules for equestrian use of watersheds
- Horses have really wide peripheral vision so may be spooked by sudden approaches. Coming from behind, call out: "Is it OK to pass now?"
- Obey all dog leash laws. Gently introduce your dog to passing horses
- Hikers should avoid using up the entire trail width, stay right and check behind you before moving left
- Bikers should stay right, give warning, pass left. Ride slowly when other users are present

Executive Director's Message

The lightning bugs have once again appeared in North Carolina and that can only mean one thing...summer! Daylight is on our side and it is once again time for the family vacation. Many folks are sticking close to home for a "staycation" or taking day trips instead of heading across the state to the beach or the mountains. Many of North Carolina's rail-trails offer wonderful day trip options for families. This edition of the newsletter highlights the Deep River Rail-Trail in Franklinville, the perfect spot for a weekend vacation. In addition to the rail-trail, Franklinville is near many other attractions like the North Carolina Zoo, the many potteries of Seagrove and several farms and ranches like Caraway Alpacas. In fact, with the help of volunteers and interns we've been amassing a wealth of information on visiting our rail-trails. If you would like to explore North Carolina this summer please head to our website and peruse the "Find a Trail" section. There you will find information on many of our existing rail-trails. We are always adding new trail reports so check back often and feel free to submit your own report!

On another note, please be on the lookout for a letter from us. We are sending out all membership renewals in June this year. Thanks so much for your continued membership and support.

Carrie Banks

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WALTER TURNER

NCRT supporter Walter Turner is interested in all things having to do with transportation and infrastructure. He is the author of books about the NCDOT and the State Ports Authority as well as several magazine articles about transportation. Walter is currently the historian at the NC Transportation Museum, a job he started in 2000 after transitioning from a career in social work.

Shortly after Carrie Banks started as Executive Director of NCRT, Walter invited her to speak

about the organization at a Civitan Club meeting in Salisbury.

Walter was impressed. "It is so exciting to see the new leadership and the new image of NCRT." A member and donor for about 10 years, Walter significantly increased his end-of-year donation in 2011.

Why does he contribute? Walter replied, "Turning abandoned rail lines into trails is a pragmatic way to utilize available land in a way that's beneficial to everyone, no matter what their ability, age or status."

UPDATE: Rail-Trail Projects

The Elkin Valley Trails Association has been awarded a \$25,000 grant from Lowe's Home Improvement. The money will be used to by building materials for two bridges over Elkin Creek.

NCRT and many other sister rail-trail organizations are waiting to hear on other grants. Fingers crossed!

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, June 26th:

Boots & Bridges Boogie

EVTA Fundraiser to build E & A Rail-Trail suspension bridges, with Dennis Greunling and the Jewltownes at the Liberty Theater in downtown Elkin.

July 14th:

Habitat Bull Moon Ride

It is a fun, quirky community-raising event attracting casual riders and families that utilizes the American Tobacco trail. Benefiting Durham Habitat for Humanity.

August 17th:

Tour de Elvis 5K and Cycle Tour

Roger F. Synder Greenway, Albemarle
704-984-9560

**NCRT Saturday, September 8th:
Full Steam Ahead**

A Benefit Concert for NC Rail-Trails featuring Mary Johnson Rockers and the Spark at the Carrboro Arts Center, Carrboro, NC

**NCRT Sunday,
October 14th:**

2nd Annual Ales for Rail-Trails 5K

in downtown Durham at FullSteam Brewery.

**October 12-13th:
NC Bike Summit**

McKimmon Center, Raleigh

